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Writing Sample

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Includes "AN EXERCISE AT FORENSICS," "WITH OR WITHOUT YOU," "MY LIFE WITH BRAD PITT," "PIERCED," "HOTEL CALIFORNIA," "OF THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS," "CHEAP," "A MATRIARCH'S MEMOIRS," "OWING THE TIGER ONE," "BACK TO NATURE," "A POSSIBLE PORTAL," "IMMIGRANT CELEBRITY," "PEN ENVY," "ONE OF THOSE PLACES," "A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER" and excerpt from TRUTH OR DARE.

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Ina GRIGOROVA

AN EXERCISE AT FORENSICS

If THIS was a crime
You'd be in shit up to your Adam's apple, baby
Your fingerprints all over the place
Your number the easily deducible Pi of every circle under my eyes
Your gorgeous DNA perfectly wasted in small rubber packages
Thrice the daily allowance
(If aliens do exist, how come they're not taking samples
And with all the Japanese tourists in town, how come no one's taking
pictures)
But let me get back to the point
If THIS was a crime,
They'd put you away
For a couple of lives
till you're reborn as a drone
Your voice pure brain massage
Your wings not a metaphor this time around
Your sting traded in for a dick
Your dick strictly disposable
Sex would mean sure death then, wouldn't it
(Freud would have called it "sting envy")
And you'd be careful with love
Where you bestow it
You'd think twice before spending it, wouldn't you
But THIS is not a crime yet
And you're free as a bird and you're just about waking up
So it's time I bring you breakfast to bed
And smile and kiss different parts of you
And somehow, fuck you!, never the whole you
Waiting silently
For them to outlaw
Whatever you did to me
To make me want you so bad
Whatever you took from me

To make me wanna give you more
Whatever you branded me with
To make me wanna see you outlawed
Or wait, maybe
I am the crime
So please someone outlaw
ME
Before it's too late
And I become a precedent

WITH OR WITHOUT YOU

Do I look like something that the cat dragged in
to you?
Definitely not.
Cause I'm a damn good actress, baby.
But when the elevator door cuts us into two separate people
I bleed out my meaning
I lose my weight in gold
I'm a wienerwurst peeling
And it's a good thing then
When the cat's around
To drag me in through the front door.
To its relatively safer side
A pet is a person's best friend
When you walk out on them,
Whistling something by Bono
Not out of tune at all
To add some.

MY LIFE WITH BRAD PITT

I've been through a lot believe me
but if there's something I don't wanna live to see,
it's Tyler Durden with a beer belly.
I've staked my all on Brad Pitt
as the prettiest horse in the race.
Brad Pitt is the reason I still remember my name
after so many more of the same

the son of a bitch must hang in for us all.
Cause once they cast Brad Pitt
as a middle-aged dentist with a golden retriever
or get him to play the dad of the main hero,
who's strong, sick and seven-ly
the kind your mom warned you about
the kind we were all dying to be
that crazy summer
when we kicked our own asses
("You should see the other guy" the ultimate irony)
I don't wanna live to see that, really.
A balding Brad Pitt - go on without me,
Brad Pitt overweight
Brad Pitt giving up on his sixpack -
that's the end of the boys I have fledged
And the end of the hawk I've unleashed over them
Brad Pitt not the thing anymore
that's the end of all we could have been
if we didn't find off-screen crusades
so boring

Hang in there, baby
We're with you, we'll cheer
while you make the world
deserve us once more

PIERCED

Does that feel better? - your face a sunrise in my south
your chin rested on my belly
as you'd shut my legs closed
like a book with such small print
it made the letters throb with peering
You'd had your tongue pierced that's why you asked
knowing damn well it felt terrific
A ball the size of a pupil
the color of a gun.
You held a bullet in your teeth and inquired
Does it feel nice? you inquired
Do you want more?, you inquired
And I rode away on your tongue of steel

Into the head-board.
Let me try it up here –
I pulled your face into mine
and kissed you in experimental ways
But the stupid ball was messing up my rhythm,
I felt like biting it off.
You reached to take it out, but
Don't, I said,
The tongue is a sculpture of veins,
You'll count to 69
And the hole will be gone, I said
Meaning to scare you.
Come to that, I was pretty selfish
Unwilling to let go
of what felt like a million tongues at a time.
But then you got bored and changed the ball for a glass one,
Then crunched it up with a burger
Then lost the whole piece
and by the time you made it to the place where they do them
it had to be done all over again.
I saw you an hour later
blood-streaked saliva on your shirt
a bottle of vodka in your stomach
no tomato yet
the *Marry* deserving its gory name
Then the special offer - all consonants in one
but most of all the pain the pain
It does heal fast, didn't I tell you,
But it feels incredible
the ball and all.
Yet I know why you put it in the first place
The previous time I'd left you for good
To move the source of pain
For a change
But the tongue heals so fast, didn't I tell you?
Why isn't the heart made of the same stuff
That's what you were wondering
Weren't you
While waiting with your mouth wide open
For a crucifixion of any sort,
With the sins of the world
gathered in the declaration

that you're not sick with anything.

HOTEL CALIFORNIA

I show you the map of my palm
an unsuccessful attempt and other landmarks.
Is that a comma, you investigate
a suspicious stumbling of cause-effect there
I start to tell you what happened back then
the knot of lines so thick and broken at the same time
and it's fucking important and I need to get it out
but - Hotel California! – you jump and turn up the volume,
Translate it for me, please, you beg like a child.
I can't, I say, that's my favorite song
and I don't feel like crying right now.
But you manage to convince me somehow
I interpret the fucking thing for you
bridging over unfamiliar vocabulary
with figments of my own poetic justice
and then when tears are a beat or two away
I pause
to light a cigarette
take a puff and then put it out
in the soft of your hand
your face - I wish I had a camera.
Now that's what I'd call "warm smell of *calitas*
Rising up through the air"
no matter what the dictionary says

OF THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS

I've been haunted by memories featuring you
And I think, how neat,
He sometimes looks at the same fat stars in a moonless sky
from a slightly different angle, of course,
Wishing things he'll never plan and postponing the difference
But then I think, he's an urban legend, he despises nature
And probably never looks at the stars anyway

and that makes it simpler but not easier
And I go on cutting your photo
into pieces as white as nail clippings.

CHEAP

Seemingly over you
I order a large Margarita*
and the configuration tempts me
into a desperate cycle of
he loves me he loves me not
He. Loves. Me. Not.
do the ones I've already eaten count?
But even children know pizzas come cut into even numbers
So it seems I'm fucked by default
which is a good thought to start all over again on
cause at least you know it's not your fault,
it's not.

* In Bulgarian 'margarita' is the word for 'daisy.'

A MATRIARCH'S MEMOIRS

I was twenty something when I called a gigolo
Had him bring me to a prime number of orgasms
And then wrote a piece about it in a magazine
Presenting it as a mechanism of overcoming pain addiction
People asked me how come I wrote it
wasn't I embarrassed
why was I so blunt
what my mom thought of it.
I didn't have to think long to give an answer.
It seems I'm always full of reasons
long before I know them.

*Once fed into the database of human experience, I said, all things
you've done and been through automatically become a part of the
memofund of the Next World Order, mistakes become cells in the body
of collective knowledge, events enter the genetic memory of the Future*

Woman which will save Mankind, stranded in the shallows of its logic, by the grace and power of intuition. And if I hide something from Her, it's like I'm deleting whole segments of possible history. So I published the experience for all women to enjoy and act accordingly.

That was my answer, the short version of it.

From then on I've used it to excuse a lot of other bullshit I've said or done.

And yes, I know what you're thinking.

Someone's pissed in the pool of the collective unconscious but it wasn't me.

I'm only the substance which colors it red.

OWING THE TIGER ONE

I'm waiting for you on a bench in the park
Which used to be a zoo when I was a child
Ghosts of animals still roaming the lawns
The rock garden scarred by the polar bear's claws
The air abristle with horny wars of independence
Apparitions of monkeys hijacking baby-carriages
Distorting the smiles of the next generation
And scaring brainless whole shipments of moms
And as I sit thinking of all this
For a moment I think I hear your footsteps
I turn my head and I spot a giant dog
Raising a leg to mark territories
Previously very much out of its reach
How would the rhino have reacted to that?
I don't think it would have healed so fast
do you?
And then the next noise it's you
And I toy with the thought
That had I not moved the beast
To the cage of the unconscious
You wouldn't be prancing around so cheerfully
All over my life now

BACK TO NATURE

I watched you disassemble the fire like a clock
Then put it back together
and really
it ticked for a while
 But I had told you to leave the mean streets of the city
 Why did you take them
 all this cocaine -- always rains the next day
And the wood we gathered, drenched to the bone
So we weren't warming ourselves by the fire
We fought for its life all night long

A POSSIBLE PORTAL

A man walked by in a suit with
Two shiny door-handles
one in each hand
He had taken them out of their wrapping
and carried them just like that
Two handles
One for getting in
One for getting out
Always at hand
In case he gets tired
And decides to check it out elsewhere

IMMIGRANT CELEBRITY

I am
- was -
big
young pretty famous
on the other side of the dream curtain
but somehow money didn't come into the deal

and I decided it should
so I took a bow
took a cab
took a plane
and landed on this side
of so much water
it would take a Noah now
to help sample my species
or give me a ride
back to mine

PEN ENVY

when I read a good novel
one of those you really wish you'd written yourself you know
I always try and find out
how old the author was
when he managed to finish it
and then secretly check
my own age at the moment
as if it matters,
as if time could win the battle
without losing the war

as if for those involved
in the mass production of memories
life didn't run backwards anyway

ONE OF THOSE PLACES

Looking for the place to pay a house bill
I ran into a desolate backyard
old tires piled up like overdone doughnuts
stashed refreshment for a race of sluggish demigods,
"Tania please call" the wall begged in white paint.

Then I spotted the message on other walls across the city
And once on a huge cable reel where the tram turned around
Locations were always picked on the same principle –
quite hidden, unless you're running some errands
one of the many in the list of a wife
and then it occurred to me Tania was married
to a boring man who was a good dad
and if one of these days he gets to do the running for her
he'll be a bit scared and then much more gentle
and the chances that Tania will call
will grow even thinner

A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER

I'd like an owl for Christmas
the boy says –
He'll live in my toy-basket
I'll throw out the toys.
Mom and dad exchange glances –
They've already bought a train, 30 meters of rails
And a couple of bridges.
I'd like an owl with important eyebrows,
you don't need to buy him for me
I'll provide the owl myself
I only want a permission for an owl.
The parents look at each other and say, Ok
have your owl, baby.
The boy jumps and kisses them, shouts hurray, dashes out,
dashes in in slow motion, a chubby bird in his arms.
He's asleep now, the boy says,
but tonight you'll see how real he is.
Thank you mom, thank you dad,
a wonderful present.
I'll let him hunt at night
and I'll own him in the daytime,
this way he'll never know
he's somebody else's owl.
Mom and dad leave the train under the Christmas tree
and find the wrapping paper intact in the morning.
Mom watches blindly

as dad tears it open and starts to assemble the railings
seeing clearly how from this day onwards
the men in her life
will be trading their years like collecting cards.

TRUTH OR DARE

(Excerpt)

Chuck, the main character is very easy-going, has a sense of humour and speaks in the latest version of slang (which is hard for me to do in English - and the underlined passages are places where I've obviously failed.) Chuck's the clown of the company. He talks fast and never stops, somehow afraid, that if silence is allowed, someone might say something that is actually true and important.

The elevator door opens and three boys and a girl (all of them around twenty, the girl a bit older) come out.

Alex has some trouble opening the front door to his apartment with the key, that's why the opening conversation is so long.

PAULA: Guys, it smells kind of funny in here.

CHUCK: (*Sings a popular football hooligan song, out of tune, but with all his heart.*) Come on, Alex! Hurry up! What did you do with that key: don't tell me you've twisted it trying to fix a kid's bicycle or something. You'll make me cry, you and your good heart.

ALEX: The landlord's turned the key twice and my key unlocks just once. I'll do it, but it takes a bit. Just cool down.

CHUCK: Come on, we're on the clock. We'll miss the hymns. I hate not starting things from the very beginning. Shit, nobody move! I'm missing twenty bucks here. Have I taken my wallet out since we met? Did I pay for the taxi?

ALEX (*very quietly*): I paid for the taxi.

CHUCK: I know, I was joking. Not for the twenty quid, though. Hey, guys, did I tell you I took Poe to a soccer game? Did Paula tell you, did you tell them, baby? She had the time of her life, didn't you.

PAULA: I didn't.

CHUCK: Yeah, well, right. We had a little accident. Paula's the girl with the worst case of bad luck I've ever seen, she got hit on the head with a stadium. Can you imagine going for your first soccer game and

being hit with a stadium seat on the head? Have they ever hit you with a seat on a football game, Alex?

ALEX: No.

CHUCK: Me neither, man. Tell me she doesn't have talent for that sort of—

ALEX: *(looks up towards the panel of the distributing frame, which hangs open)* Someone's played the cable guys again. It seems I'm only guy who's paying for his cable in this building.

CHUCK: Come on, Ally, I'm telling a story here. *(turns to Tony, the quiet guy in the company, the only one who isn't pissed off with his talking yet)* And the damn goalkeeper was Russian. Boy, are they sensitive. We did our best to drive him nuts you know, me and the guys. We'd shout: 'We got your wife here with us, is she a yogi or what? Man, the things she does... And your mum's got the best suction in town...'

ALEX: You speak Russian?

CHUCK: Yeah, right. *(meaning no)* We were just playing around, we were shouting for ourselves mostly. But! Some of us have body language you know. And some of us have body language that can actually SPELL, man. What do you think he thought I was shouting at him *(he puts up a performance to prove his point – starts moving his lips without sound, nodding towards his zipper and making dirty faces)*. Oh, he probably thought I was worried for his stock situation, giving him the Dow Jones, right? Hey, Poe, did I tell you my leg got unhinged again and now I'm gonna have to do another X-ray so they make sure the tube hasn't dislocated. I've taken so much radiation I gleam in the dark. I sweat ultraviolet. I detect false notes right on the spot, I just need to switch the light off. What the hell are you doing with that key, snailboy? I could have picked the lock ten times for the time it's taking you to unlock it.

PAULA: *(quietly)* I smell something very weird. I smells death. Sort of.

TONY: You got a tube? Where?

CHUCK: In my leg. You wanna see the scar? They're taking it out in 6 months. I was in this accident, we drove into the opposite lane, and there was another car, and we swerved into the railing to save their lives, man. We saved four lives. Four fucking lives.

TONY: Who's we?

CHUCK: It was so bad, there was a picture in the papers. Wanna see? *(Takes out a clipping from his wallet and shows him the picture of the smashed car)*

PAULA: You two haven't met, huh? Tony – Chuck, Chuck-Tony. Chuck's got a titanium rod in his hip and that's all he talks about, and

he'll be in deep trouble in six months cause they're taking it out and... He'll have to find a new identity for himself altogether. Who will you be then, Chuckie boy? *(to Tony)* Now that I've filled you in on the story, will you please stop showing any interest, cause we've all heard the story a million times and I'm gonna throw up if I hear it once again.

ALEX manages to unlock the door and they all get in, relieved.

CHUCK grabs Tony by the sleeve, so they stay a little behind the others, in the corridor.

CHUCK: And my hip gets unhinged once in a while and it snaps. Wanna feel it snap? *(Takes his hand and puts it on his hip, moves his leg. Makes a "now you know" face)*

TONY: Did it hurt?

CHUCK: What do you think? I shouldn't be running or carrying heavy stuff at all. But we went up the mountain to pick some magic mushrooms last weekend and it was fine, I climbed something like the Everest, only without the snow. No problem. They almost didn't have to carry me at all. Wanna see the scar?

PAULA: *(who's again in the same room with them, makes a desperate face)* I don't believe this. I'll go make some salad.

CHUCK: And don't do anything to the salad ok? We want this booze WORKING, for Christsake. *(To Tony)* She's a witch did they tell you that? We should keep her calm or else she'll get mad and turn us into frogs. And she won't kiss us back into princes again, she won't, I'm telling you. *(winks at him conspiratorially. Whispers)* She NEVER kisses. *(in his normal voice)* We made a spacecake once, top quality weed and all, and she got pissed cause someone said something rude about her sense of smell, and she just waved her hand over the spacecake, and it didn't work. We waited and waited. And the thing just never kicked in. *(To Alex, who's fidgeting with the TV set)* Oh, come on, for god's sake, what are we doing with that stupid thing, you're not supposed to bring it to orgasm, you're just supposed to switch it on, goddamn it. They've almost started already. What I love most about soccer is the 15 minutes BEFORE the game and you've deprived me of my FAVOURITE 15 minutes in the world... You'll fry in hell for that, man. I'm telling you you'll be one hell of a snail *flambé* in the afterlife.

PAULA *(walks in from the kitchen with a couple of glasses and a plate)*: You know what I like about soccer most? When they trip someone up and he rolls over, and starts making those faces.... *(in reverie)* Pain is just so sexy. Pain is so much like... IT. That's so much more beautiful

than when they score. Those falls are worth all the other monkey bullshit.

(She walks out towards the kitchen again)

CHUCK: *(Loud, so she can hear him)* You little pervert! That's just you, isn't it! You have to have someone crawl with pain for you to feel something for them, don't you. *(To Tony)* You know what, she used to date these two guys at the same time. She'd ditch one and she'd fall back in love with him the moment she ditched him, cause he's so cool and unhappy and his heart's broken. The one she's with, he'd be too happy for her. Too boring. Carried on like this, switching between them, for a year.

And then we pay for it, don't we... Jesus, Alex, what the hell is wrong with you?

ALEX *(looking up from the TV control panel)* I think I know what's wrong. *(rushes out to the front door and out to the unhinged door, then finds a note swept under the door, reads it)* Guys, we're fucked. My landlord's forgotten to pay. They've cut my cable.

(So the four of them, excited and tense with the expectation of a good soccer game, get stuck in a situation where they can't watch the game so they have nothing to do but face each other and talk. They decide to go and watch the game somewhere else but something happens that prevents them and so on... A "stalled-elevator" situation in which the four of them (plus a couple more that join them accidentally) go through several major crises of discovering and revealing to the others who they are and what they actually want of life.)
